SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY, NANDED

A proposal to Doctoral Research submitted to Faculty of Humanities

Entitled

Analysis of Rural Marathi Students' Learning Behaviour to English as a Second Language (ESL)

with reference to Secondary Students' Attitude & Exposure to English

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ABSTRACT:

Much research has been done on English Language Acquisition keeping in mind the changing needs of the learners of English worldwide. Countries like India have largest number of English Speakers, but the diversity in population is an issue to implement any definite teaching methodology to all at once. This proposed study explores learning style and behaviour of the students from rural Maharashtra, who have been studying English as a second language for more than 8-9 years.

The researcher would attempt to understand how these students' attitude and exposure to English affects their learning behaviour for English as a second language. What are their concepts of learning a foreign language? and how do they face difficulties in acquiring the required language skills? The researcher also tries to identify different methodologies of second language teaching being used by teachers in rural Maharashtra and how far they have proved to be helpful.

RATIONALE:

Despite being an official language of India, English is not widely used as day-to-day language especially by rural population. This makes it difficult for students to apply their classroom learning of English Language to their overall use of the language in real life inside and outside the class room. In spite of number of years invested to learning the second language i.e. English, it is rare for rural students to apply those language skills for the purpose of routine communication.

Even during the class hours they do not find it easy to use English for communication with their teachers or friends. This scenario has made the researcher to think over the outcomes of their learning. The observation was disappointing. The researcher tries to probe into ***the learning behaviour of Rural Marathi Students*** in order to make teaching and learning more student friendly so that its outcomes would be more practical for daily usage. To achieve it, the researcher tries to determine the viability of their exposure to English language in general and also their attitude towards it. So that he might fathom the difficulties of these students in using English as a language for daily communication.

Moreover the researcher belongs to the same geographical area where he is brought up in an environment where ***Speaking English*** for routine communication is rare. He is also the product of same learning environment, and believes he can study and understand rural students' behaviour in learning English as a second language.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once spoke " English is our major window on modern would." Teaching and learning of English has become part of every curriculum across India. But the expected outcomes may not have been reached. The diversity in the target group, their different learning habits and different environment might be some of the reasons.

As S. V. Shrangare in his book '*English Language Teaching*' puts it, "Exposure to the natural communication in the target language is necessary for the subconscious processors to work well. Studies show that students who are exposed to natural language, where the focus in on communication, perform better than those in a formal environment, where focus in on conscious acquisition of linguistic rules or the manipulation of linguistic forms. The richer the learner's exposure to the target language the more rapid and comprehensive learning is likely to be --" (page 134)

He also asserts in the same book, "At present, there are no established and generally acknowledged standard varieties in second language countries. As a result, teachers and examiners are uncertain as to the norms of towards which teaching should be geared: those of evolving local standards or those of some external standard." (page 44)

The idea presented in the above quote clearly expresses teacher's dilemma to choose suitable methodology for teaching of English to his pupils. It makes scope to further research to understand its learner first and determine suitable teaching methodology which will be student friendly rather than the popular methodologies of teaching English in general.

The author also states, " Learning is not mere acquisition of information, knowledge or skill. It is in fact permanent modification of mental structure. Learning is a product of basic tendencies of the child and his environment." (page 35)

Here he asserts the learner's mental structure, his tendencies and the environment in which he lives, which researcher tries to study further. His exposure to the language is something which determines his skills to acquire a new language apart from his mother tongue.

A teacher, for that matter may consider using different methods of teaching English which will be suitable for his pupils. To do so he must understand his students first and then has to give attention to the learning behaviour of his pupils.

Vijaya Kohli, in her book, '*The Communicative approach to Language Teaching: Theoretical Limits*' *talks about language pedagogy*' writes "the point I particularly wish to make, however, concerns not a continuity with tradition, but an assumed departure from it. By this I wish to suggest that whatever "revolutionary" approach we adopt to language teaching, we cannot ultimately get out of answering questions about what we believe language to be, and how we view it in relation to the individual mind and to society."(page 17)

Second language acquisition is a process that is influenced by several cognitive and environmental factors (Cummins, 2000; Hamayan & Damico, 1991). These include:

■ Age. Children who begin the process of learning English as a second language during their early childhood years generally achieve higher levels of proficiency. (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979).
■ Acculturation. Patterns of second language use will take learners longer to internalize over the more outward aspects of a new culture (e.g., clothing styles, music). (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2003).

■ Attitude and Motivation. A positive attitude along with high levels of motivation are important aspects necessary to achieve proficiency in a second language. (Hamayan & Damico, 1991).
■ **Learning Style. A learner's culturally influenced preferred styles of learning may differ from the teacher's preferred styles of teaching, resulting in an inadequate learning progress** (Grossman, 1995), including progress toward learning a second language.

Again the learner's style is seen as major factor in language acquisition. After understanding above ideas, one can conclude that the learning behaviour of the students is perhaps the most important factor in the process of learning and teaching.

Hence the present study is focused on this single most factor i.e. Learner's behaviour to acquire English as a second language in reference to the rural area of Maharashtra.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH:

The present research will only focus on the rural students of Maharashtra, especially the students of Class 10 from various schools in Latur District. The study does not include English medium students as their learning environment is bit different than the students of Marathi medium.

The students who will be the subject of this research project are 15 -16 years of age group. It is presumed that they have been learning English (ESL) consciously for at least 09-10 years. The research will not talk anything about other age groups or medium of instruction.

TITLE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT:

" Analysis of Rural Marathi Students' Learning Behaviour to English as a Second Language (ESL): With reference to Secondary Students' Attitude & Exposure to English "

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

The present research aims at determining and understanding different traits of learning behaviour of the rural Marathi students for acquisition of English as a Second Language. The researcher tries to find out the common pattern, if any, in these students' learning behaviour for English as a second language. This will be done keeping in mind their bilingual personality, their attitude and exposure to English in general.

The objective is to arrive at convincing parameters of the learning behaviour of these high school students. The researchers tries to define a common pattern of learning behaviour resulting from their personality, atttitude and immediate environment which they are brought up in.

HYPOTHESIS:

To realise the aforesaid objectives the following hypothesis are formulated in null form, as they are more akin for testing:

1. The students use their own variety of learning strategy and tools to help them learn the English as a second language. E.g. They imitate their ideal English user personality set by themselves more frequently than to generally responding positively to any other second language teaching methodology or what is actually taught to them in school curriculum.

2. Sometimes, they pretend to understand English in classrooms, but when enquired they do not react. This is not just because of faulty teaching methodologies but to greater extent due to inability to expose themselves to English more frequently and their prejudiced attitude towards learning second language.

3. Their abilities in the first language hinders their interest to use English with all their capabilities which result in the less exposure to English and they end up in not acquiring the language skills set in the objectives of curriculum.

4. Their attitude towards English is bound by their social context which do not give them ample opportunities to explore themselves to English language skills. Moreover they do not develop positive attitude needed to acquire the language skills. If the situation is altered, they learn to develop language abilities more rapidly and effectively.

POPULATION/SAMPLE:

The study is planned to include about 500 students from various schools across Latur district. The students will be randomly chosen from the 10th class of these schools. The medium of instruction is strictly Marathi which makes them second language learners of English. The students from English Medium are excluded from the research.

The students are about the age group of 15-16 years old. They have been learning English for more than 8-9 years in schools.

METHODS OF RESEARCH:

This study will use three methods:

1. **Survey of the select rural students :** The researcher will undertake a survey using 2-3 sets of questionnaire covering their personal details, enquiring about range of exposure to English they get. The researcher might take another survey to calculate any change in learning pattern if a few conditions are altered with time. Prior to the survey all the students will be given briefing about what activity they are going to participate in, what is their role in it and how it would help them.

2. **Interviewing:** The researcher will interview a few chosen students about their likes and dislikes about English. He probe into understanding their attitude towards learning English as a second language. He will have informal discussion on their difficulties to understand and use English for communicative purpose, how often they listen to, read, write and speak

English inside and outside the classroom. He will also talk about any possible ways to make learning-teaching of English easy and interesting.

3. **Content-analysis** : The collected samples through questionnaire and discussion would be analysed and a critical study would be made based on it taking the help of other research reports, articles and books. If necessary, help of educationists would be taken in the composition of the whole body of the thesis.

PROPOSED CHAPTER OUTLINE:

Following is a proposed chapter outline, the researcher is planning to follow. He may make changes if and when required with consent of proper authority.

Abstract and Foreword

1. **Introduction**
2. **Theories and Recent Trends in Second Language Acquisition**
3. **Rural Marathi Students & Learning of English (ESL): An Overview**
4. **Research Methodology and Methods**
5. **Discussion and Findings**
6. **Conclusion**

References & Bibliography

Abstract and Foreword:

This section would focuses on the need and scope of the research project. The researcher's motivation behind the project and how he would accomplish the objectives set by him.

Chapter 1. Introduction:

In this chapter, the researcher tends to explain background of his research project. He would summarise his observations on Human Language and Learning system with the help of various sources he has referred to. He also talks about the concept of Language Learning and Acquisition, their difference. Finally he would come down to learning of English as a second language.

Chapter 2: Theories and Recent Trend in Language Acquisition

The chapter would cover researcher's observation of established theories of language acquisition in relation to English as a Second Language. He would also take this opportunity to present his knowledge of recent trends in teaching and learning of English as a second language. He will also talk about various factors influencing English Language Acquisition Process, he learnt from various sources.

Chapter 3: Rural Marathi Students & Learning of English: An Overview

This chapter will completely be focused on subject of the research project i.e. Rural Marathi Students. The researcher is keen to explore into the background factors (viz. Students' culture, geographical area, family background and overall environment) that shape the learning behaviour of the subject of the research.

The researcher will try to calculate number of opportunities to understand how an average student gets to expose to English Language. He would also find out their difficulties in getting exposed to English and how their result becoming chief barriers for them to acquire English as a language of daily communication. For this purpose he may examine situation inside as well as outside the classroom.

Chapter 4 : Research Methodology and Methods

This chapter is the core of the research project. The method of sampling, data collection, organisation of the data, its reliability, validity and objectivity are some of the sub-chapters this section would cover. The researcher describes research procedure and research design in details. He presents the organised data to pave way to arrive at certain conclusion.

Chapter 5 : Discussion and Findings

The chapter covers the research findings to enable readers to get acquainted with the outcomes of the research project. Apart from the findings, the researcher would discuss at length his observations on the project and shares his experience with the readers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This is the concluding part of the project. The researcher believes that some of his questions and queries may or may not be resolved convincingly. Hence he talks about the limitations of the research work undertaken by him and sets forth an opportunity to further study and discussion.

References & Bibliography:

The section will be added at the end of research report. The researcher will identify different sources that have helped accomplish the research project. They include list of titles of the reference books, articles, journals and other scholarly material used to this research work.

RELEVANCE & CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY:

Much research has been done in teaching and learning of English worldwide. Even in India, there are number of research projects undertaken focusing on learning of English as a second language. But the findings may not be applied to each and every region across India. Moreover, very less has been done taking in view the common rural students of India and learning of English.

61,556,074 people (54%) out of the total population of Maharashtra live in rural area. (Census 2011) which means there's a the larger share of rural population. The larger section

is perhaps being neglected by the authorities when we take a look at English language proficiency of these students after learning it for almost 9-10 years. The present study tries to cover this segment of the students and make a conscious effort in understanding difficulties and various behavioural patterns of these students when it comes to use English language.

The researcher believes that the present study will surely help the authorities, policy makers for education to understand the needs of the students in formulating effective strategies and policies.

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